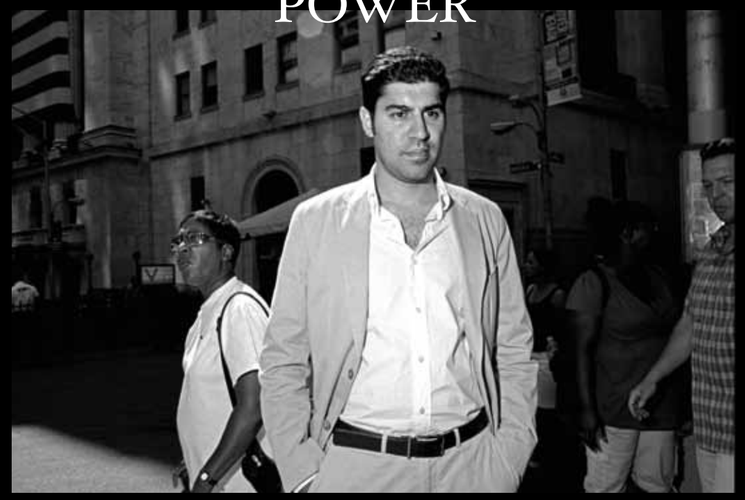
RENAISSANCE MAN PARAG KHANNA ON THE NEXT WAVE OF POST-NATIONAL POWER



"COLONIES WERE ONCE conquered, now countries are bought." So says Parag Khanna, author of the new book *How to Run the World*. It's not a manual for James Bond-style megalomaniacs, nor is it expert advice on long-distance marathons. It's the follow-up to Khanna's first treatise on "late globalisation", *The Second World* (2008), in which he defined this term as applying to a nation that exhibits both first- and third-world characteristics simultaneously. This included giants such as Brazil and India as well as smaller tykes like Malaysia. *How to Run the World* continues one of Khanna's previous arguments: that the 21st-century world is becoming more and more polycentric. If anything, cities have once again replaced nation-states as loci of political and economic power. It recalls the medieval model of Italy, where the maritime republics of Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi, and their respective ruling families, hosted the vast majority of the empire's financial, artistic and intellectual activity. "Building postmodern connections among cities rather than defending borders is the key way to rekindle the new Silk Roads of the 21st century," Khanna says. A thousand years ago, Asia experienced its Golden Age of imperialism, while philosophy and science flourished in the Arab world. Khanna sees all of this happening again, this time as a function of "postcolonial entropy". With no single power in control, today's "fractured, fragmented, ungovernable", post-Cold War world demands a new kind of diplomacy based on coalitions of governments, corporations and civic actors. Ever the optimist, Khanna's view is broad and worldly – foreign policy via Google Earth – but his hope for change is invested in neither elected nor unelected political leaders, but in self-made philanthropists (Bill and Melinda Gates, George Soros) and NGOs, most of whom get together every year at Davos and the World Economic Forum (WEF), a place Khanna calls the "archetype of the new diplomacy". So what does the future hold? "Lots of mini WEFs tailored to specific issues," Khanna suggests. Hopefully his publishers have sent copies to North Korea, Zimbabwe – and Italy – already. SHUMON BASAR

How to Run the World is out now from Random House. RANDOMHOUSE.COM; PARAGKHANNA.COM

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